I N JANUARY, 1975, Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.) A charged ‘that a senior official of the Drug Enforce- ment Adminnistration had been offered and had exam- ined a consignment of exotic assassination devices. The instruments included exploding telephones, flashlights, and cameras, and came complete with triggering mecha- nisms set to movement, time, pressure, light or sound. Their only conceivable use was for anonymous murder.

For one thing, Weicker produced a memo from the now defunct B.R. Fox Co. of Alexandria that seemed to impli- cate Conein in the company’s decision to produce the de- vices for his consideration. Nevertheless, Conein had con- vinced reporters that there was nothing more strange than the unsolicited mischief of the incident than the incident than the unsolicited mischief of the incident than the unsolicited mischief of the incident. The latter was the kind of news that the CIA gave Lou Conein. It all but read on his Agency contract: ‘For Use in the Far East Only.’

Conein’s history is by now laced with legend but the following appears to be a reasonable summary of his ex- ploits before joining the Nixon White House in 1971:

- A Legendary Career

It WOULD have been difficult to imagine a more dis- turbing appointment than that of Lucien Conein to al- most any post of responsibility in the government, much less his appointment to a highly sensitive position involv- ing the most delicate covert operations. In earlier days the French used to permit their political exiles to re- quire many years of school, internship and residency, and the other calling for an intensive 18-month program. The short-course doctors were not permitted to practice in France but they were given full license to operate in the Orient. The latter is the kind of news that the CIA gave Lou Conein. It all but read on his Agency contract: ‘For Use in the Far East Only.’

Conein’s history is by now laced with legend but the following appears to be a reasonable summary of his ex- ploits before joining the Nixon White House in 1971:

At the age of 17 Conein is said to have fled his home- town in Kansas to join the French Foreign Legion. With the entry of the United States into World War II he was transferred to the Office of Strategic Services in France, where he lived and fought with the Christian Brother- hood, who were then part of the Resistance. Before he left, Conein says, they made him a member — an honor to bear in mind, for the Brotherhood is an underworld organization deeply involved in the drug trade and con- sidered even more effective and dangerous than the Sicil- ian counterpart, the Mafia.

After the liberation, Conein parachuted into Vietnam to join an OSS team fighting the Japanese alongside the Vietnamese. There he met Ho Chi Minh and Gen. Vo Ngoc Giap. A decade later, in 1961, he was back in Viet- nam as one of Gen. Edward Lansdale’s special team, charged with setting up a paramilitary organization in the Hanoi area. He helped Ngo Dinh Diem consolidate his power in South Vietnam in the next year and in 1963 he was the U.S. embassy’s listen with the colonel of generals who murdered him.

Although he has been accused of engineering the as- sassination, his actual role seems to have been at the Kennedy administration’s only direct contact with the coup’s planners. He had occupied this sensitive position almost by default. He was married to a Vietnamese and he alone among the Americans was intimate with most of the Vietnamese high command. No one else had any- thing resembling his access to and familiarity with the Vietnamese style of doing business.

Even so, the CIA considered him an invaluable com- modity and sent him back to Washington. But he soon man- aged to return as part of an elite 18-man counterassua- ncy team under Gen. Lansdale which also included Daniel Ellsberg. Then it was war again.

It was Conein’s past association with Ellsberg and his involvement in Nixon’s overthrow that brought him to the attention of the White House in 1971. His contact was E. Howard Hunt, an OSS operative in World War II. Hunt had just begun working with Charles Colson, who was intent both on destroying Ellsberg’s reputation and discrediting President Kennedy and thus Sen. Edward Kennedy. Hunt thought Nixon’s most formidable politi- cal rival. One of Colson’s hopes was to cast responsibility for Diem’s assassination onto President Kennedy him- self.

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Cyclists were very heavy in our culture. He had been the Crow's most important figure because he was a man with a talent for trickery and a love for power. He was also very good at manipulating people, which allowed him to control major drug traffickers.

Despite his many successes, Coal was eventually caught and imprisoned for several years. After his release, he continued to influence drug traffickers from behind bars.

Operation Diamond

Conein's Special Operations

The story is told of an incident where Conein was able to successfully transfer narcotics from one country to another. Conein was known for his ability to manipulate drug traffickers and maintain control over their operations.

Barter's attitude was that any problem could be solved if you were willing to put in the time and effort. He believed in a hands-on approach to solving problems, which allowed him to make quick decisions and take swift action.

Some of Conein's operations were legal, while others were not. For example, Operation Diamond was a legal operation designed to transfer narcotics from one country to another. However, other operations, such as the assassination attempts, were illegal.

Conein's use of these operations was controversial, and he is still being studied and debated by historians today. Some believe that his methods were effective, while others believe that they were too extreme.

Regardless of his methods, Conein was able to use his skills and knowledge to maintain control over the drug trade and to make significant contributions to America's war on drugs.
Two attorneys were assigned the task. After reading the
appointed to the number two spot in Inspection. Bud
day two years ago to review the exploding devices.

The attenuated final version was then attached to
Frank, is Conein's former deputy. He was on hand that
concerned instructed them to tone down their conclu-
derations, and the Preside,a t's new guidelines for all other
report of their findings, the assistant attorney general
al, DEA's new administrator.
It is understandable that an administration would
be wish to take on Col. Conein. It is said that his closet
 sworn to witness from his days with the CIA, and
that he has a lethal knowledge of where a great number
of other bodies are buried.

But this alone does not explain the silence of the Ford
Justices Department. It is unlikely that any investigation
of Col. Conein could help but result in a larger exploration
of other past and present narcotics efforts and it would
invariability have to enter into the tangled web of Wer
Bell and Vesco.

Matthew Bell III, arms merchant, in his Georgia home.

Since the B. R. Fox Co. is a short-lived firm run out of
an Alexandria home by an electronics engineer and his
housewife. There was no explanation as to why Conein
had chosen to buy sophisticated wiretapping equipment
from such an obscure firm.

The explanation is to be found in the identity of the
actual figure behind the B. R. Fox Co. and its arrange-
ment with Conein — Mitchell Livingston Wer Bell III. Wer
Bell is one of the world's most successful inventors and
manufacturers of silencers and such exotic lethal
weapons as a rifle that fires a single bullet and a sub-
gun stick that doubles as a rocket launcher. But, most in-
portant in this context, he is one of Conein's old OSS
friends and, according to staff members on the Senate
Permanent Investigations Subcommittee, a business
partner of Conein's at least as recently, as 1976.

In an interview, Wer Bell disarmingly acknowledged a
recent business relationship with Conein. Further, he
prudently asserted that he had worked with Conein to
provide DEA with assassination devices and that the B. R.
Fox Co. had even shared the same duplex apartment
used by the DEA operatives as a safe house. (This fact is
confirmed by the La Salle building's records.)

Conein's apparent use of Wer Bell for DEA operations
seems all but incredible when one considers the arms
manufacturer's other activities in 1974 are taken into account.
That spring, while Conein was reading his assassination pro-
gram, Wer Bell was negotiating a bizarre arms deal with
Robert Vesco, the fugitive swindler in Costa Rica. Wer
Bell originally agreed to sell Vesco his entire stock of 2,-
000 silenced machine guns, but he was unable to get an
export license and so the two reached a tentative agree-
ment to build an Ingram submachine gun factory in
Costa Rica. (This is the same weapon featured in the
opening scenes of "Three Days of the Condor.")

These dealings were sufficiently menacing to draw the
attention of Sen. Henry Jackson's Permanent Investi-
gations Subcommittee. Jackson observed that Wer Bell's
Ingrams are not the "normal military defense v.vapons.
This is the kind of weapons used for covert purposes...
shall we say, microrevolutions or coups or...
what have you?

Along with Wer Bell is an arms commis-
mittee also investigated Vesco's "pandora's
Bell and Vesco. Along with Wer Bell's arms deal,
the committee probed the entangling re-
lations of Vesco, Wer Bell, Conein and the DEA.
The DEA operations, the more questions were raised.
For one thing, Wer Bell was
the DEA, the DEA had all
filed a promising investigation into changes in a
government department that Vesco was active in be-
d, and that Bell had "lost" much of Vesco's file. Even
more suspicious was the discovery that two of the
narcotics agency's covert operations dug from Los
Angeles in New Jersey to every Vesco's home and office
for possible bugs.

The further the committee probed the entangling re-
lations of Vesco, Wer Bell, Conein and the DEA, the
more questions were raised. For one thing, Wer Bell was
amiably named in 1976, charged with conspiracy to Ingram
large quantities of marijauana into the country, in a case
yet to come to trial. The staff wanted to know the pre-
game nature of the relationship with Conein.
They had already subpoenaed Vesco, Bell and others to testify when suddenly the hearings were canceled. If the
staff members knew anything, they didn't explain; but
they also didn't reveal their frustration. The decision
was not theirs.

A Pandora's Box

The recent congressional investigations into U.S.
intelligence activities did not examine narcotics op-
erations, and the President's new guidelines for all other
intelligence agencies do not even inform themselves to
DEA operations. DEA is, left over from its days through
its Inspection Division to regulate itself. It is hard to ex-
tect too much from this clerk, the man scheduled to be
appointed to the number two spot in Inspection, Bud
Prich, in Conein's former deputy. He was on hand two
days ago to review the existing devices.

A few months ago, the Justice Department, of which DEA
is a branch, conducted an investigation into some of
Conein's other operations too. One more, possibly.
Two attorneys were assigned the task. After reading the
report of their findings, the assistant attorney general
concluded on his own terms to tone down their conclu-
sions. The attenuated version was then attached to
a general report on the intelligence division and actually
limited to three copies, one each for the attorney gener-
a, the assistant attorney general, and for Peter Bensin-

per, DEA's new administrator.

It is understandable that an administration would
be wish to take on Col. Conein. It is said that his closet
is filled with skeletons from his days with the CIA, and
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of Col. Conein could help but result in a larger exploration
of other past and present narcotics efforts and it would
invariability have to enter into the tangled web of Wer
Bell and Vesco.

More than likely no one in the Ford administration
knows of Conein's presence at DEA — or knew any-
thing about his activities — until recently. But now it
probably knows more than it would prefer — sufficiently
enough to avoid opening this potential Pandora's box in
the midst of an election year.